

CONSUMER ALERT

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Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade & Consumer Protection



Utility Scam Calls to Wisconsin Businesses on the Rise

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MADISON – According to a number of utility companies in the state, Wisconsin businesses are being targeted by scammers calling with threats of service cancellations. The utilities note that these calls appear to be on the rise.

The scammers contact the businesses and fraudulently claim to represent the local utility company or to serve as an agent for the utility. They tell the businesses that they are facing a shutdown of services due to non-payment of bills or for required meter upgrades or repairs. To supposedly stop interruption of the services, the scammers demand a payment within a matter of hours by wire transfer or by Green Dot MoneyPak prepaid debit card.

The scam is not contained within one region, but in a recent crop of scam calls, a group of salons and restaurants in the Fitchburg area were targeted. When the scammers focus on one specific area, it appears as if they simply run down a list of local businesses, calling each with the same phony threat.

To avoid falling victim to this crime, consider the following tips:

- Utility companies will never call and threaten you with immediate cancellation, nor will they require a wire transfer or payment by prepaid debit card in order to continue service.
- If you receive a similar threatening call, hang up and contact your local utility company directly to inquire about your account status.
- Any request for a payment by wire transfer or prepaid debit card from someone you do not know is a huge scam red flag.
- Never give out personal or banking information on an unsolicited call.
- Never allow someone claiming to represent the utility company enter your business without a scheduled appointment or without your knowledge of an existing problem. Ask for identification.
- If a scammer contacts your business, file a complaint with your local police department. You can also file a complaint with the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection online at datep.wi.gov or by calling the Consumer Information Hotline at 800-422-7128.

For more information, visit datep.wisconsin.gov, send an e-mail to datep hotline@wisconsin.gov or call the Consumer Information Hotline.

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